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BOXWOOD

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LET US RESCUE FROM THE OBLIVION OF
TANGLED GARDENS THE BOXWOOD WHICH
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OTHER HOMES

S. B. ELLIOT, M. D.
BELLE MEADE
VIRGINIA

Description

BOX (L. *Buxus*), boxwood being the wood of the box, but generally used as a distinguishing name, is a genus of about thirty species of evergreen shrubs or small trees of the family *Buxaceae*, and is native to Northern Africa, Southern Europe, Central America, and similar climates in Asia.

The species have small oval and oval-oblong opposite leaves, one-half to one and one-half inches long, of leathery texture and deep rich, glossy green color. Most varieties have inconspicuous, staminate, sessile flowers, in terminal or axillary clusters, and nearly globular fruits containing six shining black seeds. The color of the new growth of foliage before it has fully hardened is several shades lighter than the old. The leaves are sometimes employed in medicine.

The wood of box is of slow growth, adding not more than one and one-half to two inches to its diameter in twenty years. It is very hard and close grained, and that of the larger species, growing to a height of sixty and more feet, is in demand for making musical and mathematical instruments, for engraving and fine turnery work.

Box has a pungent aroma unlike any other odor. It has been described as "that oldtime spicy, bitter-sweet fragrance."

Box thrives in almost any well drained soil and best in a partially shaded position. Several species are grown for ornamental purposes, notably *sempervirens*, or tree box, and *suffruticosa*, or English dwarf box. Propagation of tree box is by cutting from mature wood in early fall. Seeds may be sown after maturity, but it requires a long time to raise plants of good size from them. The dwarf box is usually propagated by division. It is of slower growth than other varieties and is highly valued for its effect in ornamentation.

Sempervirens box is of upright growth, sometimes reaching a height of twenty-five feet over a long period. It stands pruning well and is the best for ornamental purposes. It grows more rapidly than the dwarf variety, under favorable conditions putting out a growth of from three to six inches in a season, so that it is possible to make considerable headway in ornamentation in a comparatively short time.

The value of box has long been recognized, although there is little actual information on growing it to be found. It was appreciated in Pliny's time and written about by him. Virgil and Ovid make reference to it. For centuries it has been the most valued of shrubbery in European gardens, and in America today there is hardly an architectural scheme that is complete without it.

Value of Boxwood

BOX, by its slow, sturdy, settled growth and deep rich perennial green, creates an atmosphere of home, of stability and distinction. The planting of a few clumps of old box can give to a whole garden an appearance of having been there indefinitely. It accomplishes at one step what would take years by other means, if it could be done at all. Because of its slow growth, extending over generations, and sometimes over a century, the supply is quite limited, and as one lot after another is taken into a new and permanent home there is just so much less to be obtained and it grows more and more scarce.

To some people box has no attraction. It awakens no enthusiasm. Fine old masterpieces, exquisite tapestries and priceless antiques mean nothing. To some even the wonders and the glorious beauties of Nature have little appeal. But to persons of natural refinement and culture and appreciation of what is beautiful and worthwhile, box has a charm and a value as has nothing else that grows. It is to shrubbery what diamonds are to minerals, antiques to furniture, old masterpieces to pictures, and should be cherished accordingly.

More than a million dollars was paid by a Californian lately for four paintings by Gainsborough, Reynolds, Romney and Constable; a quarter of a million was paid recently in London for a self portrait of Rembrandt, and not so long ago three times this sum was paid for a painting of the Madonna, man's imitation of the Master's creations. Rare paintings and works of art have a very definite and considerable value; but which will give the most constant pleasure to the largest number of people, a collection of works of art or a well constructed garden, with the landscapist given free rein in the use of old box, one of Nature's masterpieces? Can there be any doubt? And the garden would cost but a fraction of the amount represented by the art collection.

We are only beginning to appreciate gardens here. We begin with a few flowers carelessly planted around the home. We advance to a garden with set beds. We go further to formal and perhaps elaborate gardens. But few ever realize that after all the real garden that is most truly satisfying is that modelled after Nature,

We wish to express our appreciation of the way in which the box hedge was handled by you in moving it from Belle Meade, Virginia, to Friendship, D. C. The box was unusually well dug and crated and arrived at its destination in perfect condition. We do not hesitate to say that this skillful handling of the plants had a great deal to do with the excellent condition in which the hedge appears today—eight months after moving.

JOHN H. SMALL, 3D, Landscape Architect,
Washington, D. C.

the master landscapist. To plan and carry on indefinitely a garden that has the atmosphere of having been there for years, that gets away from the artificial to the natural, that blends with old trees and vines and water and all the surrounding beauties of Nature, is surely the highest type of garden; and here box is most valuable, for it will give antiquity, permanency, distinction and aristocracy to the whole ensemble as can no other bush or tree or growing thing. It will charm and delight in winter as well as in summer and enhance values of property as can nothing else that grows. Who will estimate its value?



Is It Feasible to Move Large Boxwood to Distant Points, and Can It Be Done at Reasonable Expense?

AT Valley View, my residence, on Belle Meade Farm, there is a considerable amount of box, imported about 1782. Some of the hedges grew so large that the pathways became impassable. The box, true *suffruticosa*, was six to eight feet in height, and as much as ten feet in spread. A rearrangement of the grounds became necessary and I concluded to sell some of the box. I took up one hedge of this old *suffruticosa*, 400 feet long by about 8 feet in spread, shipped it and replanted it without losing one bush, and the entire work and hedge itself cost less than half the bid of a well-known firm for the moving alone.

It was securely crated with 2-inch oak, grown and sawed on the farm, 16,000 feet of lumber being used, and the entire work of taking it up was done by my own men and equipment. There were twelve flat freight cars of the box, loaded to double weight. This hedge has very much enhanced the value of the estate to which it went. Experienced realtors and professional landscapists have stated that its value to its present owner is many times its cost.

I shipped another hedge, about two feet larger in spread than the first, to New York State in the same way and have sent *sempervirens* box in clumps and individual tree form by the carload to Massachusetts, and not a bush was lost. I have more of this *suffruticosa* box as well as *sempervirens* of dense dark green foliage and perfect form on my own grounds that I mean to move, and now others who have box to sell have come to me, and I have some interesting collections of large old box and many small bushes and hedges of both varieties to dispose of, with trained men of my own and all necessary equipment for doing the work thoroughly and economically. If given a free hand I will guarantee the moving to be a success.

How and When to Move Boxwood

THE roots of box are mainly in the upper soil, there is no tap root, so the moving of even quite large specimens is perfectly feasible. It requires care and thoroughness and should be undertaken by one who appreciates box and is expert at the work, preferably one who has an interest at stake in the success of the moving.

Earth should be taken up with the bush extending to the limit of the branches and down below the roots. Excavation should be deep enough, not only to include the roots, but to make a ball that will not crumble on moving but adhere firmly. To give ample room for excavating under the bush the trench should be three feet wide and about a foot deeper than the ball of earth to be removed, two to three feet. The depth of the ball depends on the size of the bush and depth of the roots.

The ball around small plants may be held together by strong canvas, but in the case of large plants, to prevent crumbling on moving it is best to crate them strongly so they will be held rigid with heavy lumber. Two-by-eight oak plank should be used as runners and two-by-six for top stringers. The ball should be first surrounded with one inch upright pieces held together by heavy wire made taut by turnbuckles, and the runners and top stringers securely held in place by means of heavy wire and turnbuckles. Two inch cross pieces under the ball of earth on top of the runners are necessary to support it and cross top pieces are necessary for the stringers to rest on. In this way large plants can be securely crated and safely moved any reasonable distance.

Boxwood may be moved at any time of the year, but it is best to move it after the new growth has hardened and when the weather is most favorable for work in the ground. From July 1st to late fall is the best time. If it is wet it is hard for the men to work in the trenches and the balls of earth are apt to break up. Freezing weather complicates the work and makes it injurious for the men to lie on the cold, damp ground as they must in excavating under the bush.

On zero days boxwood with the perennial green of its glistening leaves will keep the garden living while the world outside is dead.

The moving of the boxwood hedge has been a great success. Mrs. McLean and I are very much pleased. We never thought the hedge could be taken up and replanted in such perfect condition. It looks as though it had always been in its present home. We thank you for all your efforts to make it a success for us.

E. B. McLEAN, *Washington, D. C.*

How to Make Boxwood Thrive

THE roots of box feed near the surface and when the surrounding ground is exposed to sun and wind it becomes hard and dry and the bush does not thrive and is apt to become spindly and lacking in its natural deep, rich color. The branches should grow low and shade the ground kept free from weeds and grass. The soil should be kept loose and damp and shaded. This is easily accomplished by mulching where it is not done naturally by the branches.

Nature mulches the trees in the forest by successive crops of leaves which, while at first acting only as a mulch, gradually rot and form leaf mold, a fertilizer of great value. The same condition can be produced readily by artificial means. If leaves are not available strawy manure can be used. Worms and insects thrive in the cool, dark, damp soil under the mulch; work it up and make it loose and available as plant food for the fine roots of the box. Leaves used for mulching can be kept from blowing about the ground by a sprinkling of manure or topsoil. The ground about the bush should be flat. If a mound is made it tends to shed the water.

It is interesting to observe two box bushes growing in the same garden, one treated with a little manure and some leaf mold and mulched with leaves, and the other with the ground about the roots exposed until it has become hard and dry. The one shrub thrives and is full and bushy with foliage of good color. The other makes but little growth, is more or less spindly and lacks in vigor and color.

In some of my box that was particularly full and round and rich in color I noticed that a good many birds were in the habit of roosting. The droppings of birds of all kinds are very rich in nitrogen, and nitrogen is the most valuable element in fertilizer to promote growth and color of leaves. The branches in this box were full right to the ground and shaded the ground, holding the mulch that collected naturally. This, with the droppings of the birds, had much to do in producing a suffruticosa box hedge that grew up to seven and eight feet in height and nine and even ten feet in spread with full round, perfect form.

Hen manure when used should be mixed with sand or light loam, as it is too strong for direct application. Horse manure when used should be well rotted. Bovine

I want you to know how delighted I am with all the box from Belle Meade Farm. It makes a wonderful showing. Thank you for all the personal care and interest you have taken in handling it.

ADELE BURDEN (MRS. JAMES A. BURDEN),
Woodside, Syosset, Long Island, N. Y.

manure is preferred by many gardeners. But all manure is good. In the absence of manure, ready mixed fertilizers for shrubbery can be obtained from any of the dealers and should be used, together with mulching, to produce the best results. But neither manure nor fertilizer should come in direct contact with the roots nor be used in excess.

Fowl should not be allowed in the garden with boxwood. They will scratch away the mulch and expose the fine roots, besides devouring the worms and insects that are necessary in developing plant food for the box. Hogs, cattle and sheep, by rooting, rubbing and breaking, are all destructive to box and it should not be exposed to their ravages.

Moisture is vital to any plant and if the box is not thriving well it should be watered frequently, particularly in dry weather or after moving; but box will not stand wet feet and should not be planted in any soil that is not well drained.

Wet, heavy snow will weigh down and break the branches, especially of old *suffruticosa* box. The *sempervirens* variety, owing to its more upright growth and tough, wiry nature, is not so apt to be injured. The snow, however, is easily removed. A few minutes with a broom or similar object, just lightly knocking and agitating the branches, will shake it off, and caretakers of grounds where boxwood is grown should be instructed, particularly in the absence of the owner, to be on the lookout for snow and remove it if it becomes heavy.



Diseases of Boxwood

THE box throughout Virginia and neighboring States on private grounds that has been left pretty much in a natural state is almost invariably healthy. It may lack vigor due to exposure of the roots through the scratching of fowl or rooting and breaking down by hogs or other animals, or too close encroachment of other shrubs or trees, but I have never seen actual disease in any of it and it quickly responds to proper care. Where much box is collected together, however, and exposed to frequent new importations, disease may be brought in. Hardy as box is, as attested by its thriving for ages, often without care or attention of any kind, it is subject to injury by certain insects.

The boxwood leaf miner is the most common and serious pest of box in the Eastern United States. The

The carload of boxwood was received in excellent condition. Every crate was intact. It is well worth while to have large balls of earth taken up with the plants and securely crated as was this, as it insures their growing without a setback.

C. D. ARMSTRONG, *Osterville, Mass.*

adult insect is a small orange yellow fly that appears about the box in great numbers, usually in May. Their flight period lasts from two to three weeks, during which time they fly about the bushes and lay their eggs through the skin on the under side of the leaves. The egg remains in the leaf, passing through the maggot and pupal stages until it emerges the following spring. It may be seen by the naked eye most of the year. It kills box leaves and devitalizes the plant, eventually destroying it.

Treatment for leaf miner is by spraying during the flight period (May) with a molasses and nicotine spray, stock-food molasses one part, water four parts with nicotine added at the rate of two teaspoonfuls to a gallon of water. This spray is applied every four or five days and the plants either covered during rainy periods or else the spray applied immediately after the rain. Four or five applications of the spray at the above intervals usually cover the entire emergence period of the adult fly. Good pressure and a short rod with an angle nozzle is essential in thoroughly wetting the lower and inner parts of the bushes. A full description with treatment of boxwood leaf miner is given in Bulletin 272, University of Maryland, Agr. Exp. Station, College Park, Maryland.

Often on close examination the leaves will be found somewhat webbed and show under a lens many exceedingly minute, reddish, greenish or yellowish spider-like animals or quantities of very small whitish shed skins. These microscopic animals feed by sucking leaf tissue and are often responsible for the poor appearance of trees and shrubs.

There are a number of different forms of treatment for spider mites, the following spray solution being usually efficacious in controlling the mite if applied three or four times with an interval of ten or twelve days between treatments. (Nicotine sulphate $\frac{1}{2}$ ounce, fish oil soap $\frac{1}{4}$ pound, water 2 gallons.) The soap should be dissolved in the water and the nicotine sulphate added just before, or when the material is placed in the spray tank for spraying. Frequent dusting of infested plants with finely powdered sulphur is also efficacious.

The oyster-shell scale is also an enemy of box, and as a complete description of it with treatment appears in Bulletin 723, U. S. Department of Agriculture, it will be unnecessary to refer further to it here.

The only other common box insect is the box Psyllid—a sucking insect which causes the new leaf to curl. When present a nicotine sulphate spray applied forcefully and several times about a week apart, beginning around the middle of April, will be found effective.

Nothing that grows is more beautiful than a great shaggy, unclipped clump of noble old boxwood.

Price of Boxwood

ASIDE from small young plants which are more or less standard and which may be had for upwards of a dollar or two apiece, the price of box in the ground depends on the size as measured by the height and spread (width), its form and its condition. Accessibility to a railroad, conveniences for moving and available labor are also important considerations.

Old boxwood was not grown for commercial purposes. It was set out originally on private grounds by the early settlers, mostly in Virginia and adjoining States. It is only on account of family changes or for some unusual reason that it is for sale. Often owners hold it at an exorbitant price. There is a moderate amount of box to be obtained, however, and the price of it, where it is definitely for sale, is pretty well established, according to size, etc. The price will advance as the demand increases and the supply diminishes, but at present old box can be obtained at an outlay that is quite reasonable.

Moving the box is a vital matter. It should be undertaken by one who is thoroughly experienced and has all the necessary equipment. I am in a position to move box economically on an extensive scale and am prepared to guarantee results. Without success in the moving, money spent on the most valuable box obtainable would be wasted.

A statement of what is required, the variety, the size as indicated by the height and spread, with some idea as to the quantity, and whether or not it is on the ground, or to be taken up and shipped, will enable me to give a definite price per bush or tree, clump or hedge. Box in hedge form is sold by the running foot, depending on the height and spread. A descriptive list of individual specimens and hedges of both varieties for sale, will be sent on request with any further information required.

S. B. ELLIOT, M. D.,
Belle Meade, Virginia

Boxwood has had much to do in making English gardens lovelier even than their beautiful and mellow old castles, which are after all man-made, while "only God can make a tree."

There is something so sturdy and settled and permanent about boxwood that merely a few clumps can give to a whole garden an atmosphere of being rooted there for years.

Men have planned and designed and builded and failed in the end until there was added the final touch of boxwood to give an atmosphere of home, of permanency and distinction.

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